

Framing Adaptation Success:

Scientific Perspectives

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and Stanford University



National Adaptation Forum • Denver, CO • April 4, 2013

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Central Question

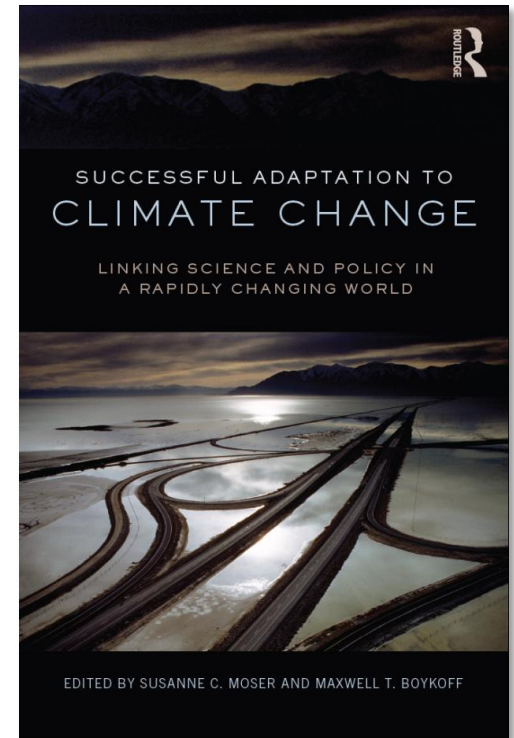
What does successful adaptation look like?

...in different physical, ecological, socio-economic, institutional and cultural contexts that characterize West Coast coastal communities

- **Scientific perspective:** What process and outcome elements could be considered?
- **Practical perspective:** How can communities measure progress towards successful adaptation, both in the near and long-term?
- **Ethical/normative perspective:** Which process and outcome elements should be considered?

Why Think About Adaptation Success?

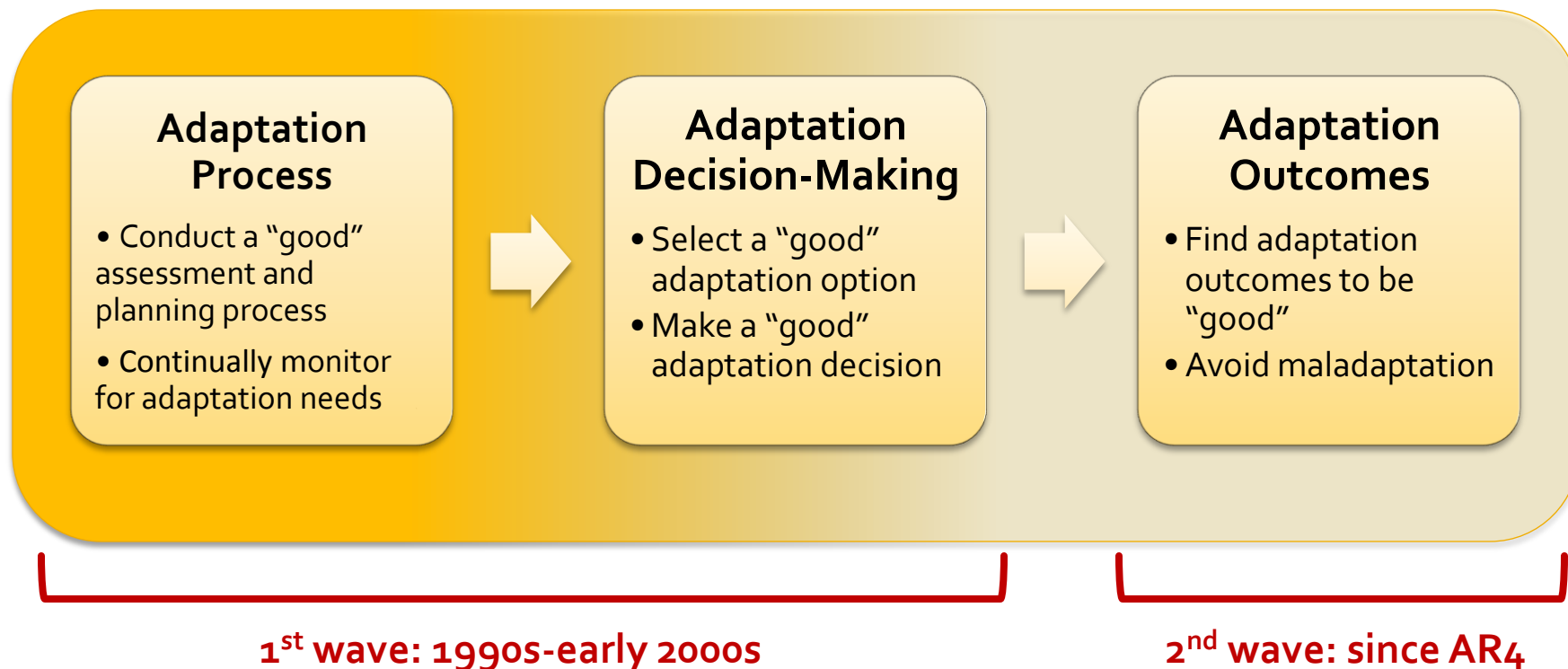
- Communication and public engagement
- Careful planning and decision-making
- Justification of adaptation expenditures
- Accountability/good governance
- Support for learning and adaptive management



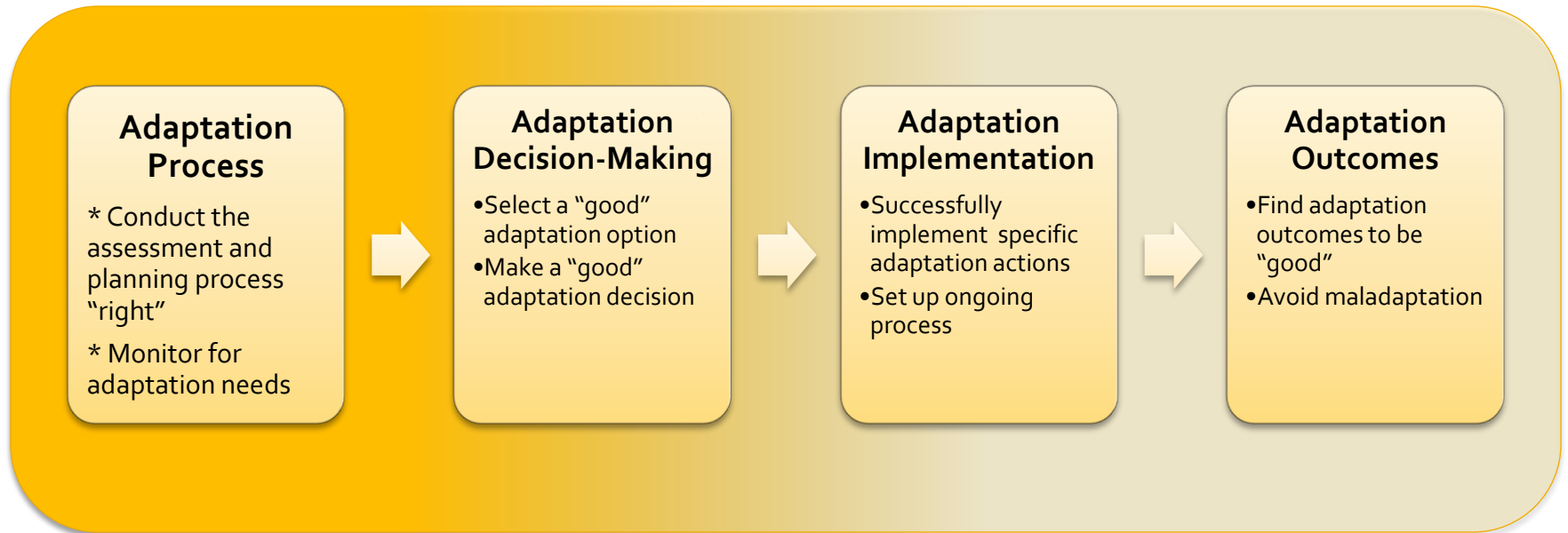
P.S.: Political sensitivities: to define/track or not to define/track

Dimensions of Adaptation Success

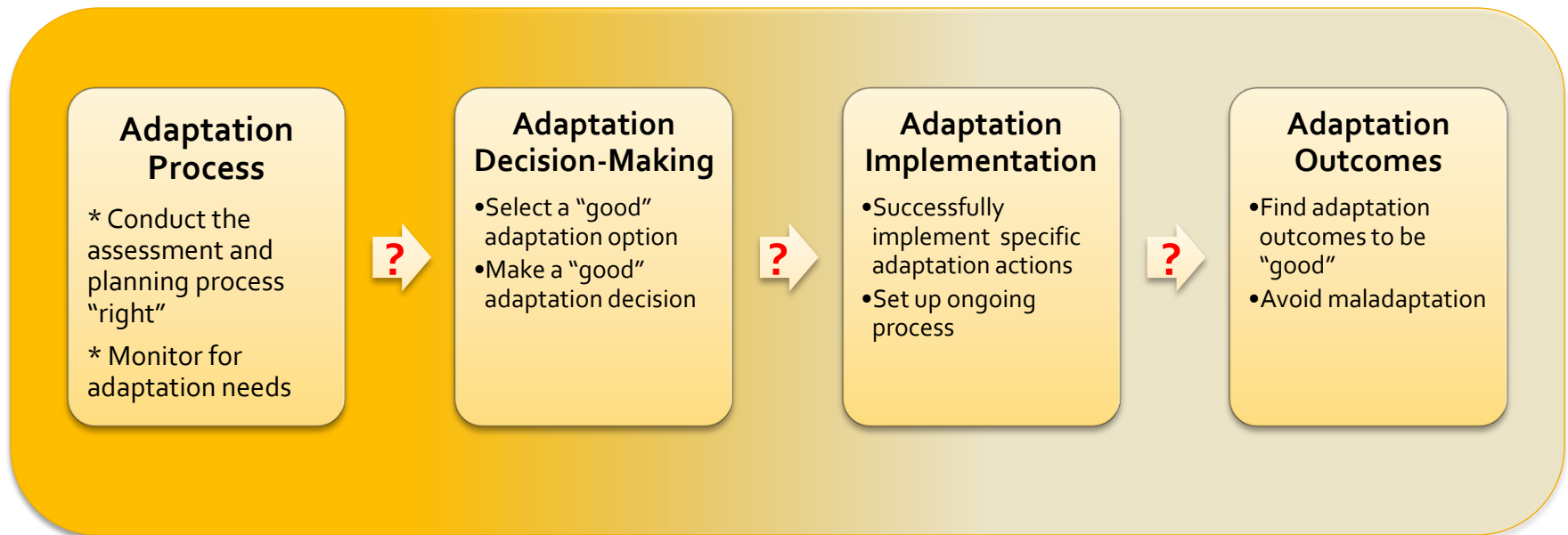
Based on literature review



Why Things Aren't So Simple



Why Things Aren't So Simple



Why Things Aren't So Simple (cont.)

- **Meaning of adaptation – What to aim for, who to involve, which trade-offs**
 - **“Structural interpretation”**
(keep what we’ve got)
 - **“Vulnerability interpretation”**
(create a better world for all)
 - **“Resilience interpretation”**
(social-ecological systems thrive the long-term)



Failure-to-Success Continuum



- Maladaptation
- Inadequate response
- Stabilization of a degrading situation
- Repair and recovery
- Building something better



Source: PSDS (2012)

Why Things Aren't So Simple

■ Adaptation outcomes

■ Pragmatic challenges

- Few projects set clear goals, establish baseline
- Few projects are far enough along to be assessed
- Few projects include monitoring and evaluation components

■ Common evaluation challenges

- Timing of assessment of effectiveness
- Establishing causality between actions > outcomes
- Inevitable normative aspects of evaluation

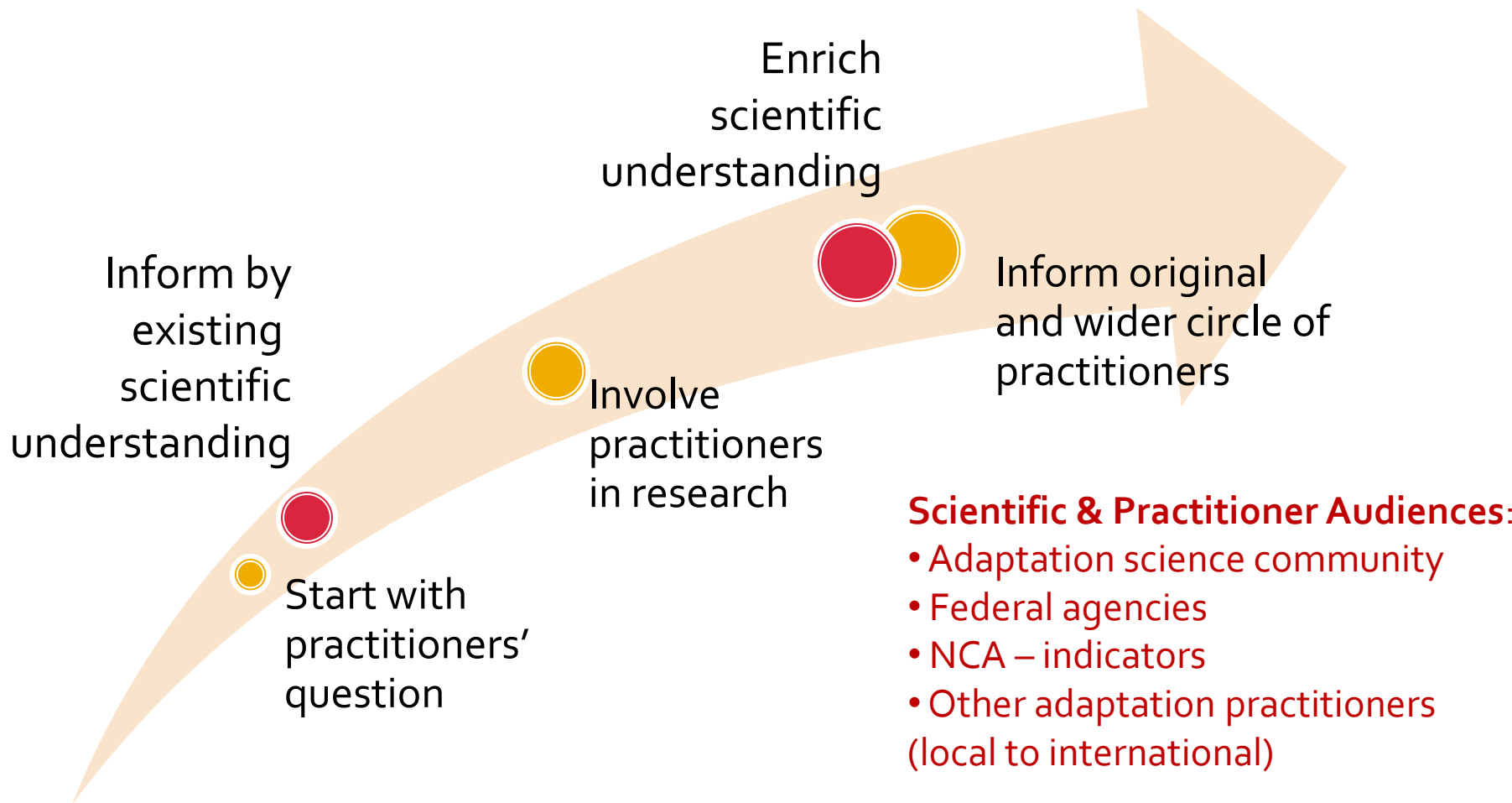


Why Things Aren't So Simple (cont.)

- **Adaptation outcomes (cont.)**
 - Climate change adaptation-specific challenges
 - No end point; dynamic; possibility of tipping points
 - Cross-scale and cross-sector interactions
 - Focus on one climate risk or multiple risks (i.e. changing risk profile, net risk)?
 - Uncertainties about future climate, other systems, and future society's values, risk tolerance
 - Avoidance of “maladaptation” – criteria?



Project Approach : Use-Inspired Action Research



Approach: Step-by-step

1. White Paper

- Scientific literature & Guidance documents
> **publication**

2. Workshops

- Scientific experts
- Practitioners in each state (incl. preparatory interviews)
- Capstone: Science and practitioners



California



Oregon



Washington

Practitioner workshop design

- Framing the key questions, concepts
- Grounding in 3 case studies from state
 - Mix of jurisdictions, actors
 - Mix of challenges
 - Each displaying different ways of succeeding
- World Café on process dimensions
- Visioning/timeline exercise to deepen into outcome dimensions
- Synthesis

Expected Outcomes



Specific results of the project:

- Clear **categorization of “desirable” and undesirable” outcomes** of coastal climate adaptation actions
- Sophisticated articulation of **desirable process characteristics** - generically, and for particular stakeholders, which and why
- **Guiding principles** on how to assess adaptation options as to their traits, desirability, and potential trade-offs
- **Practical success metrics** (e.g., existing or new “performance measures”, process characteristics)

Rest of this Session

- **Insights from Practitioner Workshops** in each of the three West Coast states:
 - Washington: Amy Snover and Lara Whitely-Binder
 - Oregon: Steve Adams (with Hannah Gosnell)
 - California: Susi Moser
- **Facilitated Discussion** with You on Successful Adaptation (Adina Abeles and project team)